

AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY

Impact from the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Overview

- Introduction to the American Community Survey (ACS)
- Impact of COVID-19 on ACS Data Collection Operations
- Impact of Data Collection Challenges on 2020 ACS Data Quality
- Plans for 2020 ACS Data Products
- Questions

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The Foundation

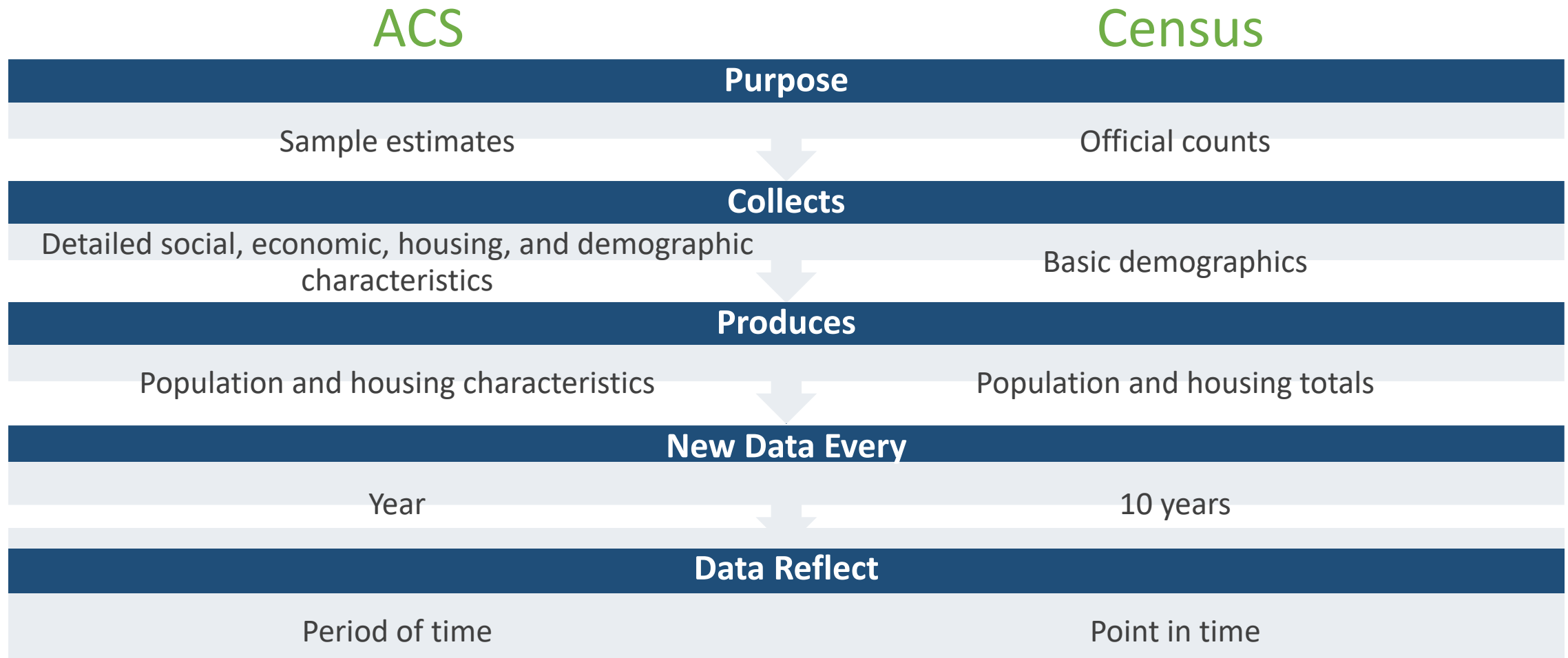
The American Community Survey is on the leading edge of survey design, continuous improvement, and data quality

- The nation's most current, reliable, and accessible data source for local statistics on critical planning topics such as age, children, veterans, commuting, education, income, and employment
- Surveys **3.5 million** addresses and informs over **\$675 billion** of Federal government spending each year
- Covers **40+ topics**, supports over **300** evidence-based Federal government uses
- Typically provides three key annual data releases:
 - 1-year Estimates (for large populations)
 - 1-year Supplemental Estimates (for small populations)
 - 5-year Estimates (for very small populations)

The image shows the front cover of the American Community Survey questionnaire booklet. At the top right, the number '13181010' is printed. The U.S. Census Bureau logo is in the top left, followed by the title 'The American Community Survey'. A green-bordered box in the upper center contains the text: 'This booklet shows the content of the American Community Survey questionnaire.' Below this, a 'Start Here' section provides instructions on how to respond: online at <https://respond.census.gov/acs> or by mail. It includes a 'Your response is required by law' section explaining the survey's purpose and a 'If you need help or have questions about completing this form' section with contact information for the Test Telephone (TTY) at 1-800-552-8330 and a Spanish-language helpline at 1-877-833-5625. On the right side, there are fields for 'Please print the name and telephone number of the person who is filling out this form', including 'Last Name', 'First Name', 'Area Code', and 'Number'. Below these are instructions on how many people to include in the survey, with checkboxes for 'INCLUDE' and 'DO NOT INCLUDE' for various categories. At the bottom, there is a 'Fill out pages 2 - 7 for everyone, including yourself, who is living or staying at this address for more than 2 months. Then complete the rest of the form.' section. The bottom of the cover features the text 'ACS-11INFO(2021)' and 'OMB No. 0507-0010'.

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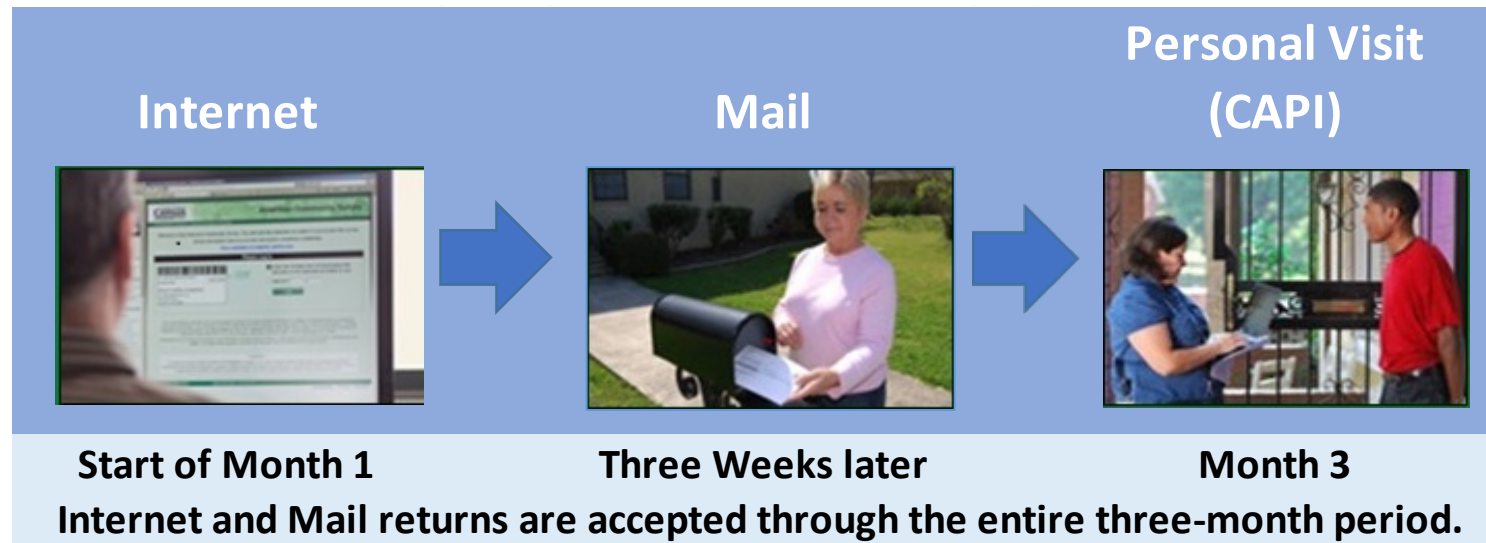
How is the American Community Survey Different From a Census?



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ACS Data Collection Process

- The ACS is a continuous, multimode survey that uses a multiple mailing strategy
- Data collection for each monthly panel takes place over a three-month period



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Data Collection Modifications Due to COVID-19

Mail

- Suspended mail operations starting mid-March through June 2020
- Resumed limited mail operations in July 2020
- Restored our full 5-piece mail strategy in April 2021

Internet

- The internet option was available only to a subset of our full sample due to reduced mailings during April—June 2020

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Data Collection Modifications Due to COVID-19

In-Person Interviewing

- **Housing Units**
 - In-person interviewing was suspended mid-March—June 2020
 - Only telephone interviews were conducted during this period
 - In-person interviewing resumed for some areas in July 2020 and for all areas without stay-at-home orders in September 2020
- **Group Quarters (GQ)**
 - Suspended interviewing mid-March—June 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions
 - Began in-person interviewing in July 2020, however some facilities continued to restrict access
 - Applied select use of administrative records

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Impact of Data Collection Challenges on ACS Data Quality

- The ACS is an ongoing survey that is designed to collect data for a new sample each month
- The ACS could not postpone nonresponse follow-up until after the peak pandemic months when it could be conducted in person, which led to a lower overall response rate and a less representative sample
- The 2020 Census was able to postpone their nonresponse follow-up until a time when they could carry out their full planned operation
 - This allowed the 2020 Census to mitigate the potential high nonresponse they would have faced had they continued their nonresponse operations during peak pandemic months
 - As a result, the 2020 Census could limit the effects of the pandemic on data quality in ways that the ACS could not
 - Overall, this translated into the 2020 Census being able to maintain higher quality throughout their data collection operations

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Impact of Data Collection Challenges on ACS Data Quality

- Given the limitations in our data collection for the 2020 ACS and our inability to fully utilize all three modes, we were unable to collect information from certain segments of the population
- As a result, significant nonresponse bias was present in the collected data
- All surveys typically have some nonresponse bias because those who do not respond tend to be different from those who do respond
- Our standard methods for mitigating the nonresponse bias are insufficient for this data year
- The 2020 ACS data collection had the lowest response rate ever for the survey at 71%, down from 86% in 2019 and 92% in 2018
 - This rate is an average across the entire data collection year
 - Response rates during the peak pandemic months were significantly lower

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2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental Data Products

The Census Bureau is committed to releasing quality data about America's people, places and economy

2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental

- Standard 2020 ACS 1-year data products will not be released because the data do not meet our statistical quality standards — <https://www.census.gov/about/policies/quality/standards/standardf1.html>
- Released an analytical report with more information on the data and related quality metrics
- The following experimental products will be released for research purposes:
 - Limited set of tables using experimental weights for limited geographic areas
 - Research paper explaining the experimental weighting methodology
 - Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) File containing experimental weights
 - Experimental weights will use methodology developed for the CPS ASEC last year, as described in [Coronavirus Infects Surveys, Too: Survey Nonresponse Bias \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/cps-asec-experimental-weights.html)
- The 2020 Current Population Survey Health Insurance Report does not include 2020 ACS 1-year data

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2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental Data Products

2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental

- 54 tables, similar in format to the ACS 1-year Supplemental Tables, covering social, economic, housing, and demographic characteristics
- Tables will be released no later than November 30th
- Available for the nation, states, and District of Columbia
- Data tables will be released on the ACS Experimental Data Page, not on data.census.gov or the API
- Table IDs, titles, and shells are currently on the page for preview
 - Table IDs uniquely identify each table
 - Table titles highlight the topics for each table
 - Table shells display the layout of the table without estimates or margins of error filled in

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/data/experimental-data.html>

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Schedule of 2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental Data Releases

| 2020 ACS 1-Year Experimental Release | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| Data Products | Target Release | |
| Media Advisory, Webinar, and News Release | July 2021 | ✓ |
| Analytical Report | October 2021 | ✓ |
| Working Paper on Experimental Methodology | November 2021 | |
| 1-Year Experimental Estimates | November 2021 | |
| 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) with Experimental Weights | December 2021 | |

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Questions for NAC

- Is there anything else the Census Bureau can provide to help stakeholders and data users understand the 2020 ACS 1-year Experimental release?
- Are there particular organizations or groups you would recommend we engage with to encourage response to the ACS?